

The Impact of Sectoral Differences on University Research
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How does the degree of publicness or privateness of a university affect the organization and nature of its research program? In a recent talk, Daniel Levy, professor and director of the Program for Research on Private Higher Education at SUNY, hypothesized that sectoral differences in higher education do matter for a range of issues (Levy at UC Berkeley, 02/19/09). However, we yet do not understand if “privateness” matters for specific university outcomes, or because the size of the private sector changes the character and dynamics of the higher education sector. This paper will explore the impact of “privateness” on basic research to examine what role for-profit private universities play in innovation, and how it differs from non-profit universities.

The number of private universities has been growing the world over. In Chile this is the result of the implementation of neoliberal public policies begun in 1980 (Brunner 1986, Levy 02/19/09). Today there are strong for-profit universities that can be compared to ‘traditional’ universities¹. I plan to compare how research is organized, financed, evaluated, and chosen at three universities: the University of Chile, created by the State in 1842; the University of Concepcion, created by a private benefactor as a secular, elitist institution in 1919; and the University Andres Bello, created by a group of private associates in 1988 as a for-profit university. Their research program began in 1996 and today Andres Bello is the first new private university to be accredited for research².

As a for-profit institution, the University Andres Bello should be more responsive to market authority (Bozeman 2007). The greater degree of “privateness” is hypothesized to influence the choice of research projects to be pursued and of indicators used to evaluate professors’ research. This implies a tendency to focus on research with a higher public visibility and lower costs, and to use indicators like patents that are assumed to reflect market-value. In contrast, both the University of Chile and the University of Concepcion, as non-profit institutions, are expected to be more responsive to political authority (Bozeman 2007). The choice of research should not necessarily reflect market needs, but may be more likely to reflect politically expressed local needs. Furthermore, I expect that all three universities will promote similar stated values and goals in their research programs because they belong to the same social and political context. This context is dominated by the State, which funds over 70% of research in Chile and defines the desirable models of academic research. Universities’ stated missions all respond to the same government incentives for research and hence, hypothetically, will be similar.

Latin American universities are often seen to train too few researchers, maintain too few links with industry, produce no ‘major breakthroughs’, and be under-funded. The remedy is to liberalize and strengthen technology transfer, including increased competition and more private funding of research (Moreno-Brid 2008, Fagerberg 2005). The innovation systems literature, which often promotes this kind of argument, has contributed to increasing our understanding of the pros and cons of different empirical indicators used to evaluate the role universities play in economic competitiveness (ie., patent counts, publication indexes). This work will guide my analysis of how research activities are measured and accounted for in

¹ Universities in Chile are often classified as new or traditional. New universities were established post-1981, when the higher education sector was liberalized.

² Since 2006 the government has implemented a series of new measures to raise quality. The main one is accreditation, for which there are separate procedures for research and teaching.

different types of institutions. I hope to contribute to a greater understanding of how indicators' meanings change according to the context.

Yet others point to some strengths of Latin American universities. They tend to profess a strong 'social commitment' (Arocena 2001) and are, with the Church and the Military, a very stable institution in an unstable region. What is lacking, possibly, is "...the conviction that endogenous innovation is a fundamental tool in the development process..." (Sutz 2003: 64). This view resonates with the idea of a "social contract for science". This is an analytical tool for probing the relationship between science and government and for exploring the principles that guide this relationship. For example, in the U.S., these principles may be seen as productivity and integrity; the State gives autonomy to the scientific community because of their integrity and in exchange for productivity (Guston 2000). The guiding values in State-Science relations in a developing country are likely to be very different. Specifically, a more important value may be relevance of research to the market, society, the state, the needs of the poorest, the environment, and others. My analysis will apply public interest (Bozeman 2007) and science policy (Guston 2000) frameworks to explore what the current social contract for science may be in Chile.

Understanding the nature of State-Science relationships in Chile may provide clues about how developing states conceive of the role of research for development in a context of increasing privatization of research. In Chile, the number and types of higher education institutions has multiplied and business opportunities proliferated: this year the Apollo Group purchased one center for US\$40 million, the Laureate Education group has partial ownership of three centers (including U. Andres Bello), and several maintain lucrative real estate ventures. Higher education centers are the third largest advertisers in the country³. This paper presents an initial exploration of what these developments mean for universities' role in Chile's national system of innovation. In addition, the analysis will yield implications for public policy in terms of how different types of universities approach research and measure research activity. This is part of a larger research project on higher education in Chile. Data is mostly publicly available directly from universities and government agencies and may be complemented with personal interviews to be conducted in June-July 2009.

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³ See www.changinghighereducation.org and <http://www.elciudadano.cl/2007/12/14/maria-olivia-monckeberg-publica-libro-“el-negocio-de-las-universidades-en-chile”/>